

ESSEX - MIDDLE RIVER COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PLAN

64. THE COUNTY SHOULD ADOPT THE PROPOSAL FOR WATERFRONT DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE TO REPLACE EXISTING MARINA AND RESTAURANT SIGNS AND TO DIRECT PEOPLE TO THE WATERFRONT AMENITIES.

A proposal now being circulated in the County would adopt directional signs and boards listing marinas and restaurants available in the various peninsulas in the community. Because many of the facilities are difficult to find by those not familiar with the community, these signs would be a real benefit, and ultimately would serve the business community. The residential community would also be served because the number of business signs on residential properties would be reduced.

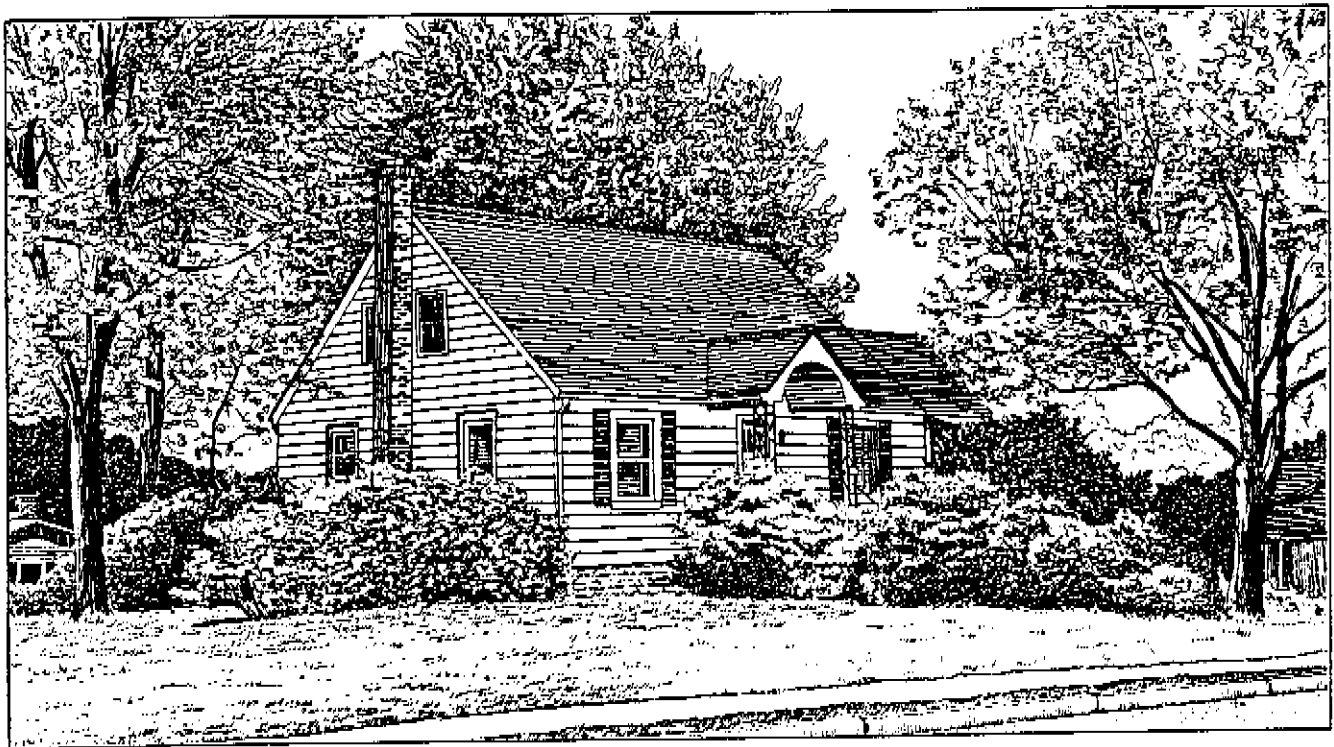
L AND USE

Land use is always one of the most important aspects of any community plan. Unless land use is planned with consideration to infrastructure and public services, development planning frequently occurs prematurely and haphazardly. There are significant factors that affect land use, of which zoning, while the most

constraining, is only a portion. Proper land use promotes stability and controlled growth. The community cannot afford to squander the land use resources available to them and should carefully monitor its planning.

RESIDENTIAL

The Essex-Middle River study area has a population density of 13.7 per acre, considerably higher than the county average of 4.16 per acre, overburdening the infrastructure and public services available to community members. There is an overabundance of apartment zoning in the community, evidenced by the high vacancy rate in existing apartments and the quantity of undeveloped high density zoned land. There are well over 1,000 vacant apartment units in the Essex area now. No new apartments have been built within the last few years, partly because of the glut on the market and in the financing of the units. Rehabilitation and redevelopment has become more practical than new construction. It is hard to plan for the future when zoning densities on the properties are unsound and encourage, rather than discourage, additional low cost housing.



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Some development in the study area is constrained by the Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas legislation. These constraints presently are in danger of dilution, however, it is in the best interests of the overall community to protect this most valuable resource, i.e. the Chesapeake Bay. Presently, zoning densities and mapping categories (intense development and limited development) within the Critical Areas continue to be in conflict with one another. High density zoning within the Critical Areas must be prohibited by legislation with current regulations retained.

65. NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD REFLECT DENSITIES NEEDED AND MARKETABLE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.

An inventory of properties suitable for residential development should be made with appropriate uses selected for the properties. As a policy residential property within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area should be used only for single family detached dwellings. Compatibility with existing neighborhoods is extremely important. Every effort should be made to attract high quality "executive housing" to the community which will entice new business to locate in this area. Currently, townhouse development within the study area frequently becomes rental property disrupting the stability of neighborhoods. Consequently, single family detached housing is desirable because it precludes townhouse development. Home ownership should be encouraged in every way possible.

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL

Approximately 600 acres of all industrially zoned land in the study area appears to be undeveloped. However, much of that land is questionable for development because of environmental constraints. The need for more living wage jobs and the sensitivity of the environment (Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas) in this part of Baltimore County, dictates the need for critical review and marketing of all industrial and commercial land use. A joint effort between the Baltimore County Department of Economic Development, the Essex-Middle River Chamber of Commerce and the Essex-Middle River Civic Council, is needed to encourage high wage earner opportunities for residents on available industrial land.

Commercially zoned properties in the study area deserve close attention. The BR classification is the most permissive of all commercial classifications. Such zoned areas should be examined and

appropriate changes recommended during the Comprehensive Zoning Map Process.

66. BEFORE MAKING IMPORTANT LAND USE DECISIONS WITH REGARD TO COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL LAND, EXISTING INVENTORIES SHOULD BE EXAMINED AND UPDATED.

Updating previous inventories of developable land should be done promptly, prior to the end of the 1995 filing period for the Comprehensive Zoning Map Process.

67. THE COUNTY SHOULD CONSIDER THE USE OF SE (Service Employment) ZONES ON VACANT LAND PRESENTLY ZONED COMMERCIAL, TO PROMOTE THE USE OF SMALL MIXED COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISES SIMILAR TO THAT BUILT ALONG GREENSPRING ROAD IN TIMONIUM AND ALONG NORTH POINT BOULEVARD NEAR WISE AVENUE.

The concept of multi-purpose use buildings housing multiple small businesses has been tried with great success in the North Point area. Such development is designed for the small shop keeper, promotes local employment and serves the local or small regional community. Vacant properties such as exist along Back River Road, north and south of Hyde Park Road, have sufficient acreage to successfully site such a project. Existing strip shopping centers now experience a high vacancy rate, indicating a lack of need for more. Pre-approval of SE zones by the County could save thousands of dollars of development costs, benefitting both the business and the civic interests in the community. These properties should be marketed by the county as Service Employment zones.

68. THE COUNTY SHOULD PROMOTE REDEVELOPMENT OF OLDER, ALREADY DEVELOPED AREAS.

Redevelopment of older buildings and enterprises in the Essex - Middle River area is difficult because of exorbitant development costs. While the businesses may continue as is, any redevelopment triggers a costly, intense developmental review that, under today's procedures, precludes development, thereby preventing the objective of upgrading the area. Consequently, designated conservation areas should be established whereby development plans are reviewed under less rigid criteria and plans are approved based on the overall improvement to existing conditions.